

Wellness Notes

Kidney Disease*

(Part I)

● What is Kidney Disease?

You have two kidneys. They are bean-shaped and about the size of a fist. They are located in the middle of your back, on the left and right of your spine, just below your rib cage. The kidneys' main job is to filter your blood, removing wastes and extra water to make urine. They also help control blood pressure and make hormones that your body needs to stay healthy.

Kidney disease -- also known as chronic kidney disease (CKD) -- occurs when kidneys can no longer remove wastes and extra water from the blood as they should. Kidney disease is most often caused by diabetes or high blood pressure. Millions of Americans have kidney disease. Many more are at risk.

Each kidney contains about one million tiny filters made up of blood vessels. These filters are called glomeruli. Diabetes and high blood pressure damage these blood vessels, so the kidneys are not able to filter the blood as well as they used to. Usually this damage happens slowly, over many years. As more and more filters are damaged, the kidneys eventually stop working.

Early kidney disease has no symptoms, which means you can't feel if you have it. Blood and urine tests are the only way to know if you have early kidney disease. If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, you should be tested for kidney disease.

Kidney disease can progress to kidney failure, also known as end-stage renal disease, at which point dialysis or a kidney transplant is needed. Kidney disease is also linked to cardiovascular (heart) disease.

Proper treatment can help prevent further kidney damage and slow the progression of kidney disease. The earlier kidney disease is found, the sooner you can take medications and other steps to keep your kidneys healthier longer.

Should you have any question regarding kidney disease make an appointment with your doctor and bring a list of concerns with you in order that the doctor can address them. Be prepared to tell him about your general health and any medications you are taking. The correct diagnosis by a trained health professional is very important